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UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Report of the third meeting, held at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 6 and 7 May 1992

SUMMARY

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education held its third meeting at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 6 and 7 May 1992. The Joint Committee reviewed the progress made since its second meeting (held in October 1990), discussed strategies for future cooperation at the country level and adopted a number of recommendations for endorsement by the Executive Boards of UNESCO and UNICEF. In the resolution, the Joint Committee urged both Executive Boards, inter alia, to call upon their respective secretariats to develop a major joint strategy on meeting the basic educational needs of women and girls in all regions. The resolution would also have both Boards encourage the two secretariats to maintain and strengthen their existing emphasis on promoting basic education in Africa as well as in all least developed countries.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The third meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education took place on 6 and 7 May 1992 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The meeting was opened by Marie Bernard-Meunier (Canada), Chairman of the UNESCO Executive Board. Ingrid Eide (Norway) was elected Chairman of the meeting and Frederick Ward (Canada) and Anatoly Lobanok (Belarus) were designated as Rapporteurs (see annex I to the present report for the full list of participants).

2. The Joint Committee adopted the draft agenda (see annex II to the present report).

I. PROGRESS MADE SINCE THE LAST JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

3. Representatives of the UNESCO and UNICEF secretariats reported on progress made by the two agencies through both joint as well as independent activities. Progress was reported on most of the eight priority areas that had been emphasized by the Joint Committee at its second meeting (see E/ICEF/1991/L.13). The discussions showed that an additional effort and greater priority would need to be given to action in areas such as strengthening planning capacities; studying the feasibility of a mass provision of basic learning materials and similar strategic inputs; basic education for women and girls; and strengthening countries' monitoring capacities.

4. There was an extensive discussion of the problem of the appalling lack of educational materials (textbooks, blackboards, chalk, etc.) in most developing countries, which was considered a major obstacle to improving learning achievement.

5. Several Committee members strongly emphasized the need for action in that field. Two concrete actions suggested by members were the development of prototype teaching materials and assistance to strengthen local manufacturing of educational materials. One member drew attention to World Bank projects for the provision of educational materials in a number of African countries, and it was suggested that the World Bank be included in the development of a feasibility study on educational materials.

6. It was noted that those strategic inputs should be seen as part of a broader context, which included, notably, the question of language policies. It was mentioned that the choice of mother tongue instruction versus instruction in an official language had considerable implications for textbook development and production.

7. Concerning the strengthening of countries' planning capacities, it was pointed out that some activities had been undertaken involving cooperation between UNICEF and the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, but further activities in that area would be needed.

II. JOINT UNESCO/UNICEF PROJECT MONITORING OF EDUCATION FOR ALL GOALS

8. Several Committee members emphasized the importance they attached to the project, which had been undertaken as part of the UNESCO/UNICEF Cooperative Agreement. The ability of the project to build national capacities and to provide national decision makers with practical tools for monitoring the situation of basic education in their countries was considered essential. One option would be to identify one or two countries that were in the forefront in the area and to work with them to establish a first model of indicators and monitoring systems that could be used by other countries. The model could be modified on the basis of evolving experience in all countries.

III. JOINT UNESCO/UNICEF PROJECT ON INNOVATIONS IN BASIC EDUCATION

9. The innovations project, equally part of the Cooperative Agreement, was supported by Committee members, who considered it important to meet the goals of education for all. It was emphasized, however, that Member States were not in a position to wait until innovative alternatives to present educational practice would be offered. Rather, they were obliged to move ahead with planning and improving existing basic educational services, incorporating changes and improvements as they went along. Some members stressed the linkage with the monitoring project and encouraged close cooperation during project implementation. A special plea was made to distinguish the analysis of educational innovations from their dissemination as the latter required different forms of expertise. Finally, it was stressed that both the monitoring and innovations projects should employ approaches for technical cooperation among developing countries, thus facilitating cooperation and mutual learning.

IV. BASIC EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

10. During the discussion, it was emphasized that improving women's and girls' education was not just a question of allocating more funds, but also related to deeply rooted cultural habits and traditions. It was, therefore, agreed that a multisectoral approach was the only meaningful way of addressing the problems of girls' and women's education and, in that connection, awareness-raising activities were considered particularly important. Furthermore, support for child-care activities (to release girls from the work of caring for younger siblings) and income-generating programmes for women (to give women greater economic control and self-respect) were mentioned as two core concerns. Notwithstanding its particular priority, members were also sensitive to the need to integrate consideration of women's and girls' education into all programme matters ("mainstreaming").

11. It was also pointed out that coordination of research on girls' and women's education ought to be a UNESCO/UNICEF area of action, together with the dissemination of research results and information on successful innovations.

12. The Committee noted that preparations were under way for a pan-African conference on the schooling of girls, and both UNESCO and UNICEF were cooperating in those efforts.

13. The entire debate on basic education for women and girls reflected a strong consensus that determined action at national and international levels would be required to achieve a breakthrough in that priority area. The monitoring project launched by UNESCO and UNICEF was expected to highlight the progress made.

V. INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOR ALL FORUM

14. The Committee took note of the progress report presented by the Secretary of the Education for All Forum and was satisfied to see that the agenda of Jomtien, the coalition of forces that stood behind it and the commitment to cooperate in support of basic education were being maintained.

VI. UNESCO/UNICEF COOPERATION AT THE FIELD LEVEL

15. In their introductory statements on this key agenda item, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Director of UNICEF expressed their full support for the Committee's view that effective UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation at the field level had to be seen as a priority and as the ultimate test of cooperation. They emphasized that if the the goals of education for all by the year 2000 were to be reached in all countries, a quantum leap of efforts and a will to take exceptional measures would be needed.

16. Members recognized that a number of different approaches would be required to respond to the specific needs of different countries and regions. It was felt that both UNESCO and UNICEF should endeavour to strengthen their basic education programmes in all countries, acknowledging and pursuing existing priorities for the least developed countries and Africa. The "Priority Africa" emphasis of UNESCO as well as UNICEF cooperation in the forthcoming Organization of African Unity (OAU) Donors' Conference on the African Child (Dakar, November 1992) were mentioned in that connection.

17. It was felt, however, that the goals of education for all could not be achieved without particular attention being paid to the largest and most populous developing countries, where as many of three fourths of the world's illiterates live. The Committee took note of and approved plans for a joint UNESCO/UNICEF initiative to support education for all in the largest countries. Their links and commonalities (huge populations, dispersed

settlements, linguistic and cultural diversity, federal structures and potential for decentralization) were stressed and it was concluded that significant lessons could be learned from joint educational efforts in those countries. Members pointed to the need for involving other Jomtien partners in the initiative and underlined the important role that the teaching profession and the media should be able to play.

18. It was generally felt that, whether in the largest or in any other developing country, the "war" to achieve education for all would require exceptional and unconventional measures. The analogy of the Bailey Bridge seemed appropriate in that extraordinary short-term devices (such as intensive training of village teachers) were required to meet immediate goals. Members noted that UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation at the field level would need to ensure that strategies are easily understood, manageable and sustainable in the longer term. It was agreed that heads of Government would need to make a personal commitment to give high priority to basic education and to play a personal role in monitoring the progress of national efforts.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

19. In concluding its debate, the Joint Committee adopted the following recommendations:

The Joint Committee on Education,

Conscious of the continuing, major challenge to the world community posed by widespread illiteracy, notably among women, limited access to primary education, poor quality and coverage, and insufficient learning achievement, and aware that urgent action is required to achieve the goals of education for all by the year 2000,

Mindful of the great importance of education, especially for women and girls, in respect of health, family welfare, food security, environmental protection, greater productivity, and the exercise of democratic rights and responsibilities,

Convinced that UNESCO and UNICEF need to strengthen further their cooperation as part of the broad alliance among countries, United Nations organizations, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations, the media and other partners which has emerged from the World Conference on Education for All,

Noting with approval the Cooperative Agreement concluded between the UNESCO and UNICEF secretariats in October 1991, in pursuance of the recommendations made by the Joint Committee on Education at its second meeting,

Having examined the progress of UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation in the various priority areas indicated by the Joint Committee, including areas in which more intensive efforts are needed to advance the common goals,

Having reviewed the outcome of the UNESCO/UNICEF inter-secretariat meeting held in February 1992,

Recommends that the Executive Boards of UNESCO and UNICEF:

(a) Urge the two secretariats to do everything within their mandates to appeal to member countries to assign education for all utmost priority in their national development plans and programmes of action, to take exceptional and unconventional measures to speed up progress towards the education for all goals, turning education into an intersectoral concern of society as a whole;

(b) Call upon heads of Government to assume personal leadership in advocacy, social mobilization and monitoring related to the achievement of the basic education goals for the year 2000;

(c) Support the initiative of the two secretariats to employ varying and appropriately complementary approaches to promote universalization of basic education, keeping in mind that different groups of countries might require different modalities of intervention, and that close cooperation of all Jomtien partners needs to be ensured;

(d) Encourage the two secretariats to maintain and strengthen their existing emphasis on promoting basic education in Africa as well as in all least developed countries;

(e) Endorse in particular the joint initiative to promote education for all in the largest and most populous developing countries, noting that significant progress in the universalization of access and better learning in these countries, which comprise two thirds of the world's population, would represent a decisive step towards the achievement of education for all goals;

(f) Call upon the two secretariats: (i) to develop a major joint strategy on meeting the basic educational needs of women and girls in all regions, emphasizing the urgency and size of the challenge and analysing the indispensable quantum leap in both national and international efforts to advance their education; (ii) to try and translate this strategy immediately into national and international plans of action; and (iii) to present progress made in this vital area to the Summit on Social Development and International Women's Conference to be convened by the United Nations in 1995;

(g) Endorse in particular the collaborative project on analysis and dissemination of key innovations in basic education, as already contained in the UNESCO/UNICEF Cooperative Programme; keeping in mind that such analysis, dissemination and cooperative problem-solving are urgently needed, and that if the goals of quality education for all and especially for women and girls are to be met and major obstacles and problems overcome, such innovations which fashion new modalities and alliances and set new standards must be strongly supported and urgently disseminated;

(h) Also endorse the joint project on monitoring of progress towards education for all goals at country level, stressing that this project must primarily seek to strengthen national capacities in this area, that its methods need to be readily applicable, and that first results should be available by the end of 1992;

(i) Request the two secretariats to give greater attention to the critical need for mass provision of basic learning materials in most developing countries and strengthening of national capacities in this area, by examining the feasibility and likely costs of different strategies, by drawing on national experiences and capacities, making use of the parallel work of other institutions and producing a progress report within one year;

(j) Consider the adequacy of the current and planned capacities of the two secretariats to assume effectively the responsibilities involved in carrying out the present recommendations;

(k) Also request the two secretariats to report on the action taken on the above recommendations to the next International Consultative Forum on Education for All, to be held by the end of 1993.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

UNICEF	Ms. Mira Seth, Chairman, UNICEF Executive Board
	Mr. Frederick Ward, Chairman, Programme Committee, UNICEF Executive Board
	Mr. Jorge Lazaro (Peru)
	Mr. Roger Iredale (United Kingdom)
	Mr. Mazharul Haq Siddiqui (Pakistan)
UNESCO	Mr. Mohamed Amine Bourokba (Algeria)
	Ms. Ingrid Eide (Norway)
	Mr. Anatoly Lobanok (Belarus)
	Mr. Domitien Misago (Burundi)*
	Mr. Alfredo Traversoni (Uruguay)
UNICEF secretariat	Mr. James P. Grant, Executive Director
	Mr. Nyi Nyi, Director, Programme Division
	Mr. Manzoor Ahmed, Special Adviser for Programme Development
	Mr. Aklilu Habte, Special Adviser, Education
	Mr. Farid Rahman, UNICEF Representative, China
	Mrs. Hala Kittani, Assistant Secretary, Executive Board
	Ms. Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Geneva
UNESCO secretariat	Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General
	Mr. Colin N. Power, Assistant Director-General for Education
	Mr. Victor Ordones, Director, Basic Education Division
	Mr. Pio Rodriguez, Secretary, Executive Board
	Mr. Dieter Berstecher, Director, Inter-agency Cooperation in Basic Education
	Mr. Michael Lakin, Executive Secretary, Education for All Forum secretariat
UNESCO Executive Board	Ms. Marie Bernard-Meunier (Canada), Chairman, UNESCO Executive Board

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* Alternate representative for Mr. Gilbert Midende (Burundi).

Annex II

AGENDA

Wednesday, 6 May 1992

1000-1700 hours, first session

1. Welcome by Ms. M. Bernard-Meunier, Chairman of the UNESCO Executive Board.

2. Opening statements by the Director-General of UNESCO and the Executive Director of UNICEF, or their representatives.

3. Election of the Chairman and two Rapporteurs.

4. Adoption of draft agenda.

5. UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation since the last meeting of the Joint Committee on Education:

   (a) Progress report on cooperation since the last meeting of the Joint Committee on Education: general review;

   (b) The joint project on development of indicators to monitor education for all goals;

   (c) The joint project on analysis and dissemination of innovations in basic education;

   (d) Brief report on the International Education for All Forum (December 1991) and its future perspectives;

   (e) Cooperation in other areas highlighted by the Joint Committee on Education, with special emphasis on basic education for women and girls.

Thursday, 7 May 1992

1000-1730 hours, second session

6. Strategies for UNESCO/UNICEF cooperation at the country level.

7. Discussion and adoption of recommendations to be submitted to the two Executive Boards.

8. Any other business.

9. Closing (brief statements by the Chairman of the meeting, as well as by Messrs. Grant and Mayor).

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Working documents

1. Draft agenda
2. New UNESCO/UNICEF Cooperative Agreement, with outlines of the joint projects on monitoring and innovations
3. UNESCO and UNICEF activities in the field of basic education for women and girls
4. UNESCO/UNICEF field-level cooperation
5. Report of the Education for All Forum
6. Minutes of the inter-secretariat meeting held at UNESCO headquarters, 25 and 26 February 1992

Information documents

7. Provisional list of participants
8. Education for All: Purpose and content, roundtable themes
9. Education for All: An expanded vision, roundtable themes
10. Basic education and national development: lessons from China and India, by Manzoor Ahmed with Cheng Kai Ming, A. K. Jalalruddi and K. Ramachandran
11. Literacy for rural women in the third world, by Krystyna Chlebowska, UNESCO
12. Educating girls and women: a moral imperative (UNICEF)
13. Education for all: educational building and furniture (UNESCO newsletter)
14. World Education Report 1991 (UNESCO)
15. Jomtien follow-up: action and comments at country level (paper submitted to the International Education for All Forum, UNESCO, December 1991)
16. EFA 2000 Bulletin